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ABSTRACT

A deliberate policy to separate and forcibly assimilate Aboriginal First Nations children into the mainstream has pervaded every era of Aboriginal history in Canada. Each era saw a new reason to take Aboriginal children away from their homes, placing them in residential schools, foster care, or non-Aboriginal adoptive families. In the words of individuals telling about their childhood, each chapter of this book focuses on a particular aspect of the history of Aboriginal children from the time of first European contact to the present. Chapter 1 relates the experiences of four generations of one author's Sto:lo family, describing the pre-European life of the tribe and removal of children by priests, social workers, and police. Daily life in residential schools and foster homes is described, along with children's attempts to preserve their language and culture amid universally abusive conditions. Chapter 2 deals with four centuries of Church-run residential schools, including: the Recollets in 1620; the Jesuits, Ursulines, Anglicans, and Methodists; and the Canadian government institutions which closed in 1984. Personal stories detail emotional, sexual, and physical abuses and the posttraumatic stress disorders of survivors. First Nations' attempts at redress are also described. Chapter 3 describes the growth and workings of the child welfare system after World War II. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with reasons for widespread sexual abuse and efforts to heal survivors and sex offenders. Chapter 6 looks at historical antecedents of fetal alcohol syndrome and ways in which Aboriginal communities are combating it and assisting its victims. Chapter 7 describes both the problems and the strong potential of Aboriginal youth today. Contains references, photographs, and an index. (SAS)

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